

# NATO missile destroys Milosevic's residence

BELGRADE, Apr 22: With NATO apparently taking its attack directly to Slobodan Milosevic, the Yugoslav president's main residence was destroyed before dawn Thursday in what state media condemned as a "criminal" missile attack, reports AP.

Milosevic and his family were not inside the luxurious two-story house in Belgrade's elite Dedinje district at the time of the 4 am (0200 GMT) attack, the state news agency Tanjug said.

The gutted shell of the columned white building was shown on Serbian television, an entire section bashed in and the yard and interior littered with debris. The Tanjug news agency had reported that the residence, one of two Milosevic maintains in the capital, was levelled to the ground. The footage showed the charred structure still standing.

Milosevic appeared on television hours later meeting with a special Russian envoy, former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, who is pushing Moscow's latest bid to negotiate an end to the NATO air campaign.

"We came with specific proposals aimed at stopping the tragedy in Yugoslavia," Chernomyrdin said at the Belgrade airport after his arrival, according to Tanjug.

The attack on the president's residence backs up NATO's pledge to move its nearly month-old campaign into a new phase, directly targeting Milosevic's ruling machinery and political support system after mostly focusing on strategic and military sites.

On Wednesday, missiles slammed into a Belgrade high-rise housing offices of his governing party and a radio and TV station owned by Milosevic's daughter Marija.

As world leaders began gathering in Washington for a NATO 50th anniversary summit clouded by the conflict, there was no hint of a diplomatic breakthrough or an easing of the refugee crisis which has sent more than 600,000 ethnic Albanians pouring out of Kosovo.

Allied leaders remained resolved to press ahead, and there was increasing speculation

about the use of ground troops. But NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana said Thursday that no decision to send ground forces into Kosovo would be taken at the summit.

"The strategy is clear. It is the air campaign," he told Associated Press Television News. "It will continue to be so."

Despite overcast weather, NATO warplanes pounded a wide area of Yugoslavia for a 28th night and strong explosions rattled the Yugoslav capital before dawn for a second straight day. Serbian media, usually quick to report damage, remained silent about the strike on Milosevic's residence for nearly six hours.

"Criminal NATO missiles struck around 4 o'clock this morning the residency building of the Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic at 15 Uzicka Street in Belgrade," Tanjug said.

Milosevic uses the nearby White Palace, a former Serbian king's residence, as his office. NATO officials have said he spends nights in different bunkers in and around the capital to avoid being targeted in an airstrike.

Tanjug said NATO aircraft on Thursday also hit targets in Kosovo, west of the provincial capital Pristina, with detonations sounding in Pomazatin and Belacevac at mid-morning.

The Yugoslav Foreign Ministry asserted on Wednesday that 500 civilians have been killed in the airstrikes and more than 4,000 seriously injured.

As NATO stepped up its air attacks, the first batch of US Apache helicopters arrived in neighbouring Albania, providing new muscle to the alliance's capability to destroy tanks and troops of Yugoslav forces blamed for atrocities against Kosovo Albanian civilians. It wasn't known when the helicopters would go into action.

The strikes on Belgrade and the arrival of the Apache helicopters signalled NATO's resolve to escalate the conflict until Milosevic accepts a Western-dictated peace plan for Kosovo, a province of Yugoslavia's republic Serbia with an overwhelmingly Albanian population.

In Washington, US officials said President Bill Clinton still opposed using ground troops. However, two officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Solana has given the go-ahead to US Army Gen. Wesley Clark, supreme commander of NATO forces in Europe, to reassess whether ground troops are needed.

In a move which could lay the groundwork for a ground campaign, the governments of Slovakia and the Czech Republic both agreed Wednesday to allow NATO to use their road and rail links to support efforts to end the Kosovo crisis.

That would enable the United States to move troops and equipment from its bases in Germany through the two countries to Hungary, the only NATO member which borders Yugoslavia.

Two other countries neighbouring Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria, have agreed in principle to let NATO use their airspace for air attacks. Romania's parliament was expected to formally authorise the move Thursday.



An ethnic Albanian refugee couple walks past Italian NATO soldiers securing the area outside Kukes Wednesday. Some 100 ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo were evacuated later by helicopter from Kukes to other Albanian villages. — AFP photo

## BRIEFLY



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II meets with British veterans of the Korean War at a ceremony at the British Embassy in Seoul Thursday, the last day of her four-day state visit to South Korea. The queen later departed Seoul's military airbase for London. — AFP photo

**Queen Elizabeth ends ROK visit:** Britain's Queen Elizabeth II departed Thursday, ending a four-day state visit during which she celebrated her 73rd birthday and strived to promote friendly ties with South Korea. AP reports from Seoul.

"She superbly served as a messenger of friendship," the state KBS television network said in summing up the first visit to South Korea by a British head of state. The queen's itinerary was filled with cultural and historical events. But in between, she also visited firms with British ties and met local industrialists to encourage their investment in Britain.

**Floods kill 5 in Lanka:** A break in torrential rains has helped ease Sri Lanka's floods that have killed at least five people and left some 200,000 homeless, a senior official said yesterday. Reuters reports from Colombo.

"According to information we received this morning the floods are subsiding," deputy director at the Social Service Department Nimal Hettiarachchi told the agency. But the Meteorology Department warned that the persistent thunderstorms that have lashed the southern and central parts of the country since Monday would continue.

**US may nominate Morningstar EU envoy:** President Bill Clinton intends to nominate Richard L. Morningstar as US ambassador to the European Union, the White House said Wednesday. AP reports from Washington.

Morningstar currently serves as special advisor to the president and secretary for Capisan Basin Energy Development. He was first appointed to the administration as senior vice president of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and was later named special advisor to the president and secretary of state on assistance to the new independent states of the former Soviet Union.

**UN envoy heads to Horn of Africa:** UN special envoy Mohamed Sahnoun headed to Paris en route to the Horn of Africa and a renewed diplomatic effort to end the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. AP reports from United Nations.

Sahnoun, who departed Wednesday, was expected to hold talks in Paris with President Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso, chairman of the Organisation of African Unity which has been trying to find a solution to the border dispute between the two Horn of Africa countries.

**Bhutan to introduce TV:** Bhutan is ending its ban on television and starting its own network, finally lowering its guard against outside influence in the remote Buddhist kingdom. AP reports from New Delhi.

Broadcasting will begin June 2, but initially only in the capital Thimphu, a city of 40,000 residents, said the Kuensel weekly, Bhutan's only newspaper. That date marks the 25th anniversary of the coronation of King Jigme Singye Wangchuck.

**Landslide kills 14 in Philippines:** A landslide triggered by heavy rain in a mining village in the southern Philippines killed at least 14 people, including three children, civil defence officials said Thursday. AP reports from Manila.

Rescue workers were searching for five other people who were still missing Thursday, a day after the landslide buried their homes in the village of Diwalwal in Compostela Valley province.

## Turkish far-right party wants execution of Ocalan

ANKARA, Apr 22: Turkey's far-right party, a key winner in national elections, will push for the death penalty against Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan if he is convicted, a spokesman said Wednesday, reports AP.

The Nationalist Movement Party, of MHP, emerged as Turkey's second largest party after Sunday's elections and is expected to be part of a future coalition government headed by Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit.

Ocalan was abducted by Turkish commandos in mid-February and faces trial on charges of treason, which carries the death penalty.

"If the court sentences him to death, we will vote to see him hanged," said Ata Turkoglu, an MHP spokesman. "We want this to happen as soon as possible after the verdict."

## Muslim rebels kill 13 soldiers in Philippines

ZAMBOANGA, Philippines, Apr 22: Muslim guerrillas said today they killed five soldiers and eight government militiamen in three days of fighting in the southern Philippines island of Basilan, reports AP.

A military spokesman here confirmed the clashes around the town of Sumisip, but did not admit to any government casualties.

Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) fought off an army patrol which strayed into the rebels' Hosni training base on Monday. MILF spokesman Shariff Julabbi told reporters.

The rebels killed five soldiers and eight militiamen while two guerrillas were slain and a third was wounded.

Colonel Rafael Romero of the army told reporters about 50 guerrillas ambushed an army patrol near Sumisip on Monday, triggering a five-hour firefight.

## Assault on Anwar Ibrahim Former police chief charged in KL court

KUALA LUMPUR, Apr 22: A powerful former police chief who assaulted ousted deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim the night of his arrest was charged in a Kuala Lumpur court Thursday, the national news agency Bernama reported, reports AP.

Abdul Rahim Noor, who resigned from the powerful post in January over speculation that he beat Anwar, confessed he did so before an independent probe issued its report on the matter earlier this month.

It was the first time in this Southeast Asian nation, where police enjoy sweeping powers, that a former police chief had been forced to resign for an abuse. It also marks the first time one has been charged in a criminal court.

Details of the charges were not immediately available.

The probe, headed by a former chief justice of Malaysia, had recommended that Abdul Rahim be prosecuted for causing the injuries. Anwar's lawyers had demanded that the ex-chief be charged with attempted murder.

The commission had recommended that Abdul Rahim be charged with causing grievous hurt to the former deputy prime minister, a charge that carries a sentence of up to three and a half years in prison and fine. In his defence, Abdul Rahim has said he was taunted and provoked by Anwar.

Anwar's injuries remained unknown to the world for nine days until he showed up in a courtroom with a black eye.



Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (L) stands at the tomb of Russian Tsar Peter the Great during an excursion to the Petropavlovskaya Fortress in St. Petersburg Thursday. The Pakistani Prime Minister is on a two-day visit to St. Petersburg. — AFP photo

## Private army of upper-caste Hindus kill 12 Dalits in Bihar

NEW DELHI, Apr 22: Nearly 100 members of a private army allegedly swooped on two villages in eastern India early Thursday and shot and killed up to 12 people belonging to the lower caste, Indian news media reported, reports AP.

The latest carnage was considered a revenge for the killing of 35 upper-caste Hindus by Communist rebels last month in a continuing caste war in Bihar, considered to be India's most lawless state.

Ranbir Sena activists, suspected of receiving arms and funding from upper caste landlords, attacked two neighbouring villages in Gaya district, 850-KM southeast of New Delhi, and fired indiscriminately on the villagers, killing eight instantly, according to Press Trust of India news agency and independent Start television.

PTI quoted police as saying three of the injured subsequently died in hospital, while Start TV gave the number as four. Other details were not immediately available.

The assailants escaped after the attack even though police have been combing the area for the past month to track down Ranbir Sena activists.

Last month, the Communist guerrillas had struck in neighbouring Jehanabad district, where 192 poor people belonging to lower classes and 54 upper caste Hindus have been killed since 1981.

Dalits, which means "oppressed ones," are the lowest group in Hinduism's hierarchy.

Most Dalits are poor, uneducated farm labourers.

The Communist groups have been trying to organise labourers in Bihar to improve their condition and secure them land, a challenge to the social order that the Ranbir Sena has answered with violence.

The caste killings had prompted the Hindu nationalist-led federal government to fire the state government, run by a socialist party, last month. The federal government said the state had disintegrated into total lawlessness.

But the state government was restored later because Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's party did not have the support for necessary parliamentary ratification of the federal takeover of Bihar.

## Declaration of state on May 4 Arafat may postpone decision

GAZA CITY, Apr 22: The Palestinians may delay their decision on whether to declare independence until after Israel's May 17 election, Yasser Arafat's senior adviser said Wednesday, reports AP.

Arafat initially said he would declare statehood May 4, but has since softened his position. Those close to Arafat believe he will postpone any action so as not to boost Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's chances of getting re-elected.

In recent weeks, Arafat has toured the world to consult with foreign leaders on statehood. On Wednesday, Arafat returned from a tour that took him to Libya, Pakistan, India, Japan, Indonesia, Egypt, Yemen, Russia and Turkey.

Arafat has told his Cabinet that he encountered overwhelming opposition abroad to a surprise reversal — announced in January that it would grant the Timorese independence if they reject widening autonomy. Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975 and later annexed it.

Indonesian Ambassador Nugroho Wisnumurti came to Wednesday's talks with revisions to a 60-point UN autonomy plan that we approved Monday by Indonesia's Cabinet. Portugal's UN Ambassador Fernando Neves got a first look at the Indonesian proposals.

But both envoys said they didn't discuss the revised text during talks Wednesday with Annan's special envoy Jamsheed Marker. Their bosses — Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas and Portuguese Foreign Minister Jaime Gama — will tackle the new text Thursday and Friday during talks with Annan.

Asked whether he was optimistic they would wrap up an agreement by Friday, Neves said: "We will work for it."

As he left UN headquarters, Wisnumurti said, "I have said I have been always cautiously optimistic."

The talks are the first since Annan announced in March that the two sides agreed to let the 800,000 people of East Timor decide whether they want autonomy or independence from Indonesia.

Marker warned that the upsurge in fighting could threaten a ballot, but last week he said he still intends to proceed with voting.

## Autonomy proposal for East Timor Portugal, Indonesia hopeful of signing accord this week

UNITED NATIONS, Apr 22: Portuguese and Indonesian negotiators expressed cautious optimism that an agreement would be reached this week on autonomy proposals for East Timor, which would pave the way for a ballot on the troubled territory's future, reports AP.

A peace deal announced Wednesday to end the escalating violence in the former Portuguese colony was welcomed by the Indonesian and Portuguese as they began a critical round of UN-sponsored talks on East Timor at the United Nations.

While also welcoming the announcement UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stressed that the agreement must be fully implemented for the talks to succeed and East Timor to have real peace.

Violence has intensified in East Timor since Indonesia — in a surprise reversal — announced in January that it would grant the Timorese independence if they reject widening autonomy. Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975 and later annexed it.

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## Global warming may make El Nino-like conditions permanently

NEW YORK, Apr 22: Conditions like El Nino may become permanent if global warming gets bad enough, making climate disruptions such as droughts or excessive winter rain essentially the norm, a computer study suggests, reports AP.

That might happen around the year 2050 if nothing is done to control emissions of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases, said researcher Mojib Latif of the Max Planck Institute for Meteorology in Hamburg, Germany.

El Nino is a natural phenomenon that involves a surface warming of the eastern and central Pacific Ocean around the equator. It happens every three to four years on average. It can disrupt climate around the world.

## US bombers attack Iraqi targets

ANKARA, Apr 22: US fighter planes on Wednesday struck anti-aircraft sites in northern Iraq after they were threatened by Iraqi radar, the US military said, reports AP.

US Air Force F-16Cs dropped laser-guided bombs on the anti-aircraft sites while patrolling the northern no-fly zone, the US military said in a statement from Incirlik Air Base in southern Turkey.

All planes returned safely to base after targeting the sites located west of the city of Mosul, some 400 km north of Baghdad, the statement read.

The Iraqi armed forces said civilian installations and weapons sites were bombed.

The Iraqi statement did not report any damage or casualties, but said the planes had also entered southern Iraq from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

US and British planes have been enforcing the northern no-fly zone since the 1991 Gulf War to protect rebel Kurds from the Iraqi Air Force. Another zone in the south protects Shiite rebels.

The Iraqi government does not recognise the zones and has been challenging allied planes here since December.

On Wednesday, Iraq asked the Arab League to persuade Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to stop offering facilities to US and British warplanes.

In a message addressed to Arab League Secretary General Ibrahim Abdel-Maguid, Iraq accused the allied planes of dropping fuel tanks on Iraqi farms in the south, causing unspecified damage and casualties, the Iraqi News Agency reported.

## Trial of Khmer Rouge commander AI repeats call for int'l tribunal

PHNOM PENH, Apr 22: Amnesty International renewed its call for an international tribunal to try former Khmer Rouge commander Ta Mok, saying Thursday that Cambodian courts would only stage a show trial, reports AP.

The London-based human rights group called the military court in charge of Ta Mok's case incompetent and said the former guerrilla leader would not receive a fair trial.

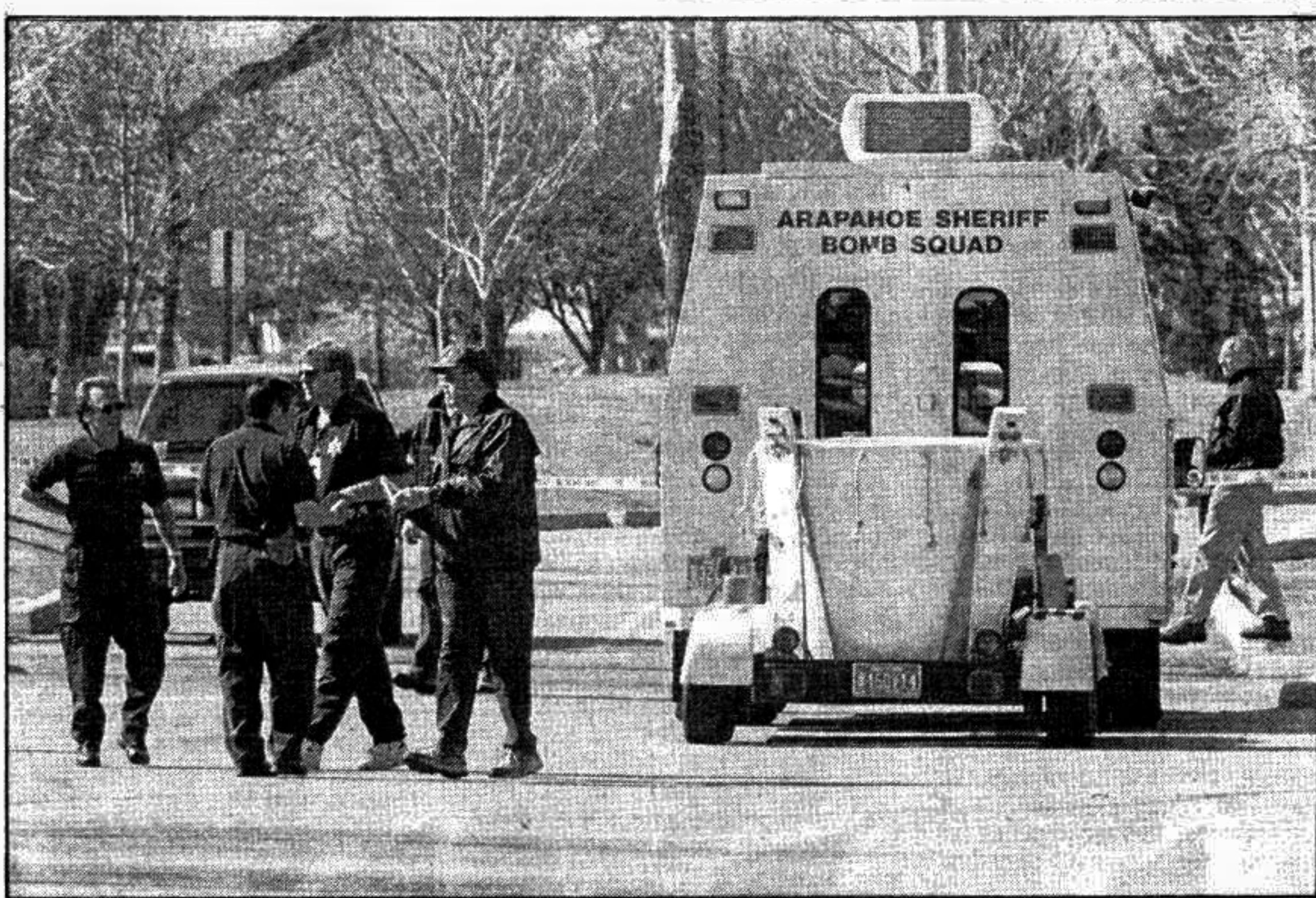
"A domestic trial will not be fair, cannot reveal the truth and does not serve the principles of justice and accountability," said the statement, prepared for the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva. "Cambodians deserve better than a show trial, and this chance will not come again."

Khieu Kanharith, secretary of state for information, said that it is too early to talk about the form of the trial but stressed that justice must be done.

"Instead of waiting to see what shape the court will take, everyone is already putting blame on that court without knowing what it will look like," he said. "But the form does not matter. What matters is that justice be served."

Ta Mok is the only Khmer Rouge leader under arrest. Others are living freely with no charges against them, since receiving de facto pardons from the government in exchange for laying down their arms, although experts believe them equally culpable for the genocide.

The Khmer Rouge ruled Cambodia from 1975-79. The Maoist-inspired group transformed the country into a vast agrarian labour camp and as many as 2 million Cambodians are believed to have died from execution, starvation, disease or overwork.



Police officers prepare to search for bombs in the Columbine High School area in Littleton, Colorado Wednesday. Authorities confirmed that 15 people including the two teenage suspects, were killed in the rampage of gunshots and explosions at Columbine High School in Denver on Tuesday. — AFP photo

## US teenage duo planted 30 pipe bombs to maim, kill more

LITTLETON, Colorado, Apr 22: The two teenage gunmen who killed 13 people in a shooting spree at their high school before killing themselves also planted 30 pipe bombs as part of a plan to maim and kill as many people as possible, authorities said on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

The Jefferson County Sheriff's Department said they believed that Eric Harris, who just turned 18, and Dylan Klebold, 17, were alone when they walked into Columbine High School on Tuesday and shot at students and teachers, the elaborate nature of their plan prompted suspicion that others may have known about it.

"There was a lot of planning put into this. It took a considerable amount of time to make it (the arsenal)," said Jefferson County Sheriff John Stone. "I have concerns whether two people could carry all that stuff in there."

The county's prosecutor, Dave Thomas, agreed. "There is some belief that there are other people at least knowledgeable about this," Thomas told reporters.

The arsenal discovered by police was daunting: One sawed-off shotgun, one nine millimetre semi-automatic rifle and a handgun in addition to 30 pipe bombs planted at the school, in two cars in the school parking lot and at the assailants' homes.

The Jefferson County Sheriff's Department said there were several different types of pipe bombs, including some about 12 inches (30 cm) long, some 6 inches to 8 inches (15 cm to 20 cm) long, and a third type that had a timer tied to a propane gas cylinder.

The death toll in the worst act of violence ever at an American school stood at 15 on Wednesday, including the two gunmen who took their own lives. Officials originally feared that the death toll would be as high as 25.

Twelve students — nine boys and three girls — were killed in the school library, one adult male was shot dead outside the library, and two or three students were killed outside the school. Davis said some of the victims' bodies were found under desks and cubicles, indicating they may have been trying to hide or run for their lives.

Students on Wednesday decorated with red flowers a car belonging to Rachel Scott, who died in the attack.

By Wednesday evening, officials had removed all 15 bodies from the school. "We've got them all of the school, they're over at the coroner's office," the Sheriff said.

The removal had been delayed because authorities feared there may be booby-trapped explosive devices still in the building.

In the midst of the horrified reaction in the community, police also tried to deflect criticism that they were not on the spot soon enough, saying they answered the 911 call within three minutes.

A Jefferson County deputy who was posted at the school shot at one of the gunmen.